

"IMPOSTURE"

by

Hughes Allison

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(Imposture-Act or conduct of an impostor;
a fraud or imposition; deception.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)

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WHEN JOE HILL REPORTED "in" at Headquarters at eleven o'clock that Monday morning, only a few of his Central Bureau colleagues were present in their quarters adjacent to Chief Richard Belden's third floor office. He exchanged "goodmornings" and went to his desk where he found a memorandum. It said, "See Shaw immediately --Duffy"

Shaw was a member of the Homicide Squad. Joe picked up his desk 'phone; the operator connected him with Shaw's desk on the fourth floor.

"It's a Prospect Heights job," Shaw told him. "Meet me down in front. We'll use my car."

They met, got in Shaw's car. It was a beautiful morning, a nice morning to be driving out to the nicest section of Oldhaven. Shaw shifted gears, said:

"One of the prowler car boys called Headquarters at nine a. m. He said a maid, Alice Crawford, at sixty-six Prospect Heights, reported she found her employer, Mrs. Martha Welles, dead in the woman's second floor bedroom. Lieutenant O'Hara took the Squad out there and left me at Headquarters. At nine-fifty, the Lieutenant

'phoned Inspector Duffy. The Inspector called me and said you and me had a job. That's all I know. Have a good weekend?"

Joe said, "Caught up on my sleep. Did the Inspector go out to the house?"

"Yeah," Shaw replied. "So I guess it's a nasty one"

A small, sedate, conservative crowd had collected in front of sixty-six Prospect Heights, but the men in uniform weren't having any trouble keeping order. The Prospect Heights section was that way: serene, orderly, adamantly in favor of existing institutions. Houses along the street were symbols of stability, neat, placed well back on the kind of lawns associated with upper-middle-class urban communities. The particular house was a two and a half story cottage whose exterior was entirely void of color. Its terracotta shingled roof, its weather-boarding, even its brick steps were a gleaming white.

Joe and Shaw found Inspector Duffy and Homicide Squad Lieutenant O'Hara in the hall just inside the front door.

"We've sent for John Welles, the woman's husband," O'Hara told them. "He's an executive at the Commerce Square Department store. On the 'phone, Welles told me his wife was all right when he left here at seven-thirty. Alice Crawford, the maid, got here at eight-thirty. She found the body at eight-forty-five stretched across the foot of the bed"

"The back of her head," Duffy said, "had been bashed in with a good-size monkey-wrench we found on the floor beside the bed. No prints on it. Wiped clean"

"The maid says the cook ought to be here," O'Hara said. "He's due mornings at nine o'clock. Well the cook ain't here"

Duffy said, "He's a Negro--about forty-two years old--named Willie Brown!"

O'Hara who was looking toward the open front door said, "This must be the husband now!"

The man coming up the front steps fitted perfectly into the Prospect Heights mold. He possessed just the correct air of prosperity, authority, stability. He was in his early forties. He was tall. He wore good, conservative clothing. He had dark brown hair, pale blue eyes, a "distinctive" chin. His complexion was very fair.

An officer in uniform gestured at Duffy and O'Hara, and the man walked toward the group standing in the hall.

"I'm John Welles," he said.

The Inspector said, "I'm Inspector Duffy. This is Lieutenant O'Hara, and Detectives Shaw and Hill."

Welles nodded. His eyes lingered a bit on Joe.

O'Hara said, "Detective Hill's a Central Bureau man. We think your cook is an angle. By the way, Mr. Welles, where is your cook?"

Welles said, "Willie? Isn't he here?"

O'Hara didn't answer that. He put a cigarette in his mouth and looked at Duffy.

The Inspector said, "Mr. Welles, we'd like you to go up stairs with us and identify your wife."

Welles said, "Yes. Of course."

"Please don't put your hands on the railing as we go up," O'Hara told Welles. "And don't touch anything--not even a doorknob--upstairs."

They started up the stairs.

Duffy said, "Mr. Welles, how'd you get to work this morning?"

"I called a taxi," Welles answered.

"Why?" O'Hara asked. "You've got two cars in your garage. Both of 'em work fine!"

Welles said, "I was scheduled for an eight-thirty conference at the store this morning."

He cut it off right there--as if what he'd said was a complete statement in connection with the question involving his use of a cab when he had two automobiles at his disposal.

"Well?" O'Hara said. "Go on, Mr. Welles?"

Duffy said, "Hold it a minute O'Hara. Tell me, Mr. Welles, what door did you use to leave the house?"

"The front door," Welles replied.

"Lock it behind you?" Duffy asked.

"It's on a spring lock," Welles said.

O'Hara said, "Was that door locked behind you when you left this house, Mr. Welles?!"

Welles stopped in his tracks on the stairs and looked at O'Hara. The Lieutenant's voice had been loud, almost a shout. Detectives down in the hall and on the landing above stopped being busy to look at the group of men half way up the flight of stairs.

Quietly, Welles said, "What is your name, sir?"

"Homicide Squad Lieutenant Oscar O'Hara!"

"Yes. I remember now," Welles said. "Lieutenant O'Hara!"

"Now what about that door?" O'Hara said.

Welles said, "I'm positive that when I left the house this morning, the front door was securely locked!"

Without further conversation, they went on up the stairs and into the room containing the corpse. Dr. Harold Winston, the Medical Examiner, and two Homicide Squad detectives were there. The room was a glossy reprint of a department store's Sunday newspaper's illustrated advertisement of a modern bedroom. The body of Mrs. Martha Welles, clad only in a nightgown, lay face-up across the foot of the bed. Her tall, slender figure was neither voluptuous nor over-matronly. She had long auburn hair. The staring eyes were sea-green. Her complexion was like snow.

Alive, she, too, had fitted into the Prospect Heights mold.

Duffy said, "Mr. Welles, how old was your wife?"

"She was my age," Welles said.

He turned, walked out of the bedroom; in the hall, with Duffy and Dr. Winston following close on his heels, he increased his pace, obviously heading for a bathroom.

Lieutenant O'Hara said, "I don't like Mr. John Welles!"

Shaw said, "He has a way of answering questions. His way"

"I don't like him," O'Hara said. "Shaw, you and Joe go on down to the living-room. As soon as he stops being sick, we'll bring him there--and let him give us some real answers!"

Shaw said, "He'll give answers. His way!"

BEFORE JOE AND SHAW went back down stairs, they let their practiced professional eyes quickly take in the principal factors connected with the scene in the bedroom. There wasn't much blood. What there was of it had been soaked up by the bedding underneath the corpse's head where it lay on the edge of the bed. The wrench, with which the death blow had been struck, was a rather large instrument. It lay on the floor below the woman's head. There were

no signs indicating there had been a struggle.

Joe and Shaw went down stairs, entered the living-room, and saw that it was also a detailed replica of a department store's lavish Sunday "ad". In a little while, Inspector Duffy and Lieutenant O'Hara joined them.

"It's clear to me," O'Hara told Duffy, "this guy, Welles, is going to make us work to get answers out of him!"

Duffy said, "You don't like the man, do you, O'Hara?"

"I don't like him," the Lieutenant said. "And I want a run down on everything about him. For instance, what kind of a big shot is he in the Commerce Square Department Store?"

"Don't you go jumping to conclusions, fellow," Duffy said. "He gets under my skin too. But I'm going to keep an open mind. As for his connection with the department store--well, we've got a couple of boys in the Central Bureau who can take care of that. Burnett and MacDonald are department store detail specialists. They know all the department store dicks!"

"Okay. Swell!" O'Hara said. "Put Burnett and MacDonald on that end of it!"

Duffy went to the living-room 'phone, called Headquarters, and said the necessary words in connection with the job for Burnett and MacDonald.

O'Hara looked at Shaw and Joe. "Welles really got sick," he said. "Doc Winston is settling his stomach for him. It looked to me as if Welles hated like hell to have to show he was the least bit affected by what's happened to his wife. That--I don't understand!"

"What isn't understandable about it?" Joe asked.

O'Hara and Shaw exchanged glances; and Shaw said, "I had

my eyes on his face all of the little while he was in his wife's room. That guy loves that woman. She meant a hell of a lot to him. I've seen lots of husbands, wives, parents, children and other relatives look at their kin homicide victims. Usually they just let go. But this guy, Welles, bottled up his emotion and put in the stopper--like doing that, bottling it up, was a religion?"

"Hamm-huh," O'Hara agreed. "Like doing it--was his religion?"

JOE WAS NOT SURPRISED, after Welles came into the living-room, to see that the man paid him considerable attention. Covertly, with even greater care to conceal his annoyance (or was it animosity?), John Welles' eyes kept focusing in Joe's direction. Duffy and O'Hara began using mere words, then gradually and smoothly let what they said assume the shape and form of pointed specific questions. After they got right down to pertinent facts, O'Hara said:

"Now I want to get a clear picture of this, Mr. Welles"

"Yes. Of course you do, Lieutenant," Welles said.

"You arose this morning at six-forty-five," O'Hara said. "You dressed leisurely. You went to your wife's room. You exchanged goodmornings. She accompanied you downstairs. She took up a position with you at a front window. There, together, you waited for the taxi-cab you had summoned. The cab arrived a few seconds before seven-thirty. You kissed your wife goodbye. When you went out of the front door--which you locked behind you when you closed it--it was seven-thirty. You waved the cab-driver back to his seat. You went out to the side-walk. Your next-door neighbor--a Mr. R. S. Waverly, a retired insurance company executive,--was at that moment passing in front of your house. Did you say that Mr. Waverly habitually takes a walk along the side-walk of this street at

seven-thirty mornings--unless the weather is simply too severe?"

"That is what I said," Welles replied.

Duffy said, "You and Waverly met on the sidewalk near the open cab door. Then what happened?"

"I've already told you that," Welles said.

O'Hara's face assumed the color of an over-ripe tomato. But he kept his temper; he even smiled. "As I said before, Mr. Welles, we want to get this clear. Mere routine, you know?"

Welles said, "I said goodmorning to Waverly. Waverly said good-morning to me. I turned and waved my hand at my wife who was still at the window. Mr. Waverly took off his hat and bowed to my wife."

"Did you call out to your wife?" O'Hara said. "Call out your wife's name--or anything like that?"

Welles thought for several seconds. "Yes. I believe I did. Yes. I'm sure I spoke--said something to her"

"Using her name--say like 'so-long, Martha?'--or 'dear?' Or-- Just what do you call your wife, Mr. Welles?" O'Hara said.

"I've always addressed her as Martha," Welles replied.

"Now then," Duffy said. "The cab driver took you to--somewhere?"

"To the Oldhaven Mansion House," Welles answered.

O'Hara nodded. "Let's see now," he said. "I know that's a rather exclusive restaurant in the downtown section. About a block away from your store, isn't it?"

Welles said, "It's approximately that distance away from the Commerce Square Department Store"

Duffy said, "You looked at your wrist-watch as you entered, and it was ten minutes to eight. You had breakfast there. Then you walked over to the store. There, you entered by the co-workers' door--which was the only way into the store at that hour--and took

an elevator up to the fourteenth floor. That's the location of the store's main offices. You went to your own office, left your hat and coat there, and then went into the--er Executives' Conference Chambers?"

"We call it that," Welles said. "I believe--when we were all present--fourteen of my colleagues, excluding me, were assembled there. That was where I was--in conference--we're launching our regular one month's anniversary sale next Monday--I say, that was where I was when the Lieutenant's telephone call was switched to me!"

"The conference, you say, was unexpected, Mr. Welles?" Duffy asked.

Welles said, "Well, I'd say it was scheduled rather unexpectedly. The President of the store called the meeting--let's see--I received the message early this morning about two a. m."

"What time do you usually reach your office, Mr. Welles?" O'Hara asked.

"Promptly at eleven-thirty o'clock each morning, except Saturdays and Sundays, unless an exigency arises," Welles said.

"Now about your cook, Willie Brown?" Duffy said. "We haven't discussed him yet!"

O'Hara said, "Yes. Let's get to him. Incidentally, Mr. Welles, Detective Hill here is the only Negro plainclothesman in The Old-haven Department Of Public Protection. Suppose you give Detective Hill and Detective Shaw all the information you have about Willie Brown?"

In supplying the desired information, Welles did not look at Joe; not even covertly. He ignored Joe; said, "I don't know very

such at it will be. I engaged him but I got through the Standard Employment Agency. He is highly recommended. He was at the event though at the time the first one had been secured would have--er secured a different type. He had--"

O'Hara interrupted. "You mean, you would have had a white cook?"

Without comment, Weller went on. "Willie had a white cook named Sam the Navy. While in the service, he was responsible for his specialty--cooking. Previously, I understood, he had been military training as a chef. He's a real good cook. He's the best I've seen and resorts. We found him most satisfactory!"

"Okay," O'Hara said. "Do you know Willie Brown's address?"

"I've his address and telephone number somewhere around here. Let me see now," Brown said. "I can't recall the precise address. There's a private model housing development in the Middle Ward."

Shaw said, "There're several such places in the Middle Ward. And still most of the area is a slum. Detective Hill have living in one of those developments--The Wallace Thurman House?"

"No," Weller shook his head. "That isn't it. Let's see, O'Hara. Willie has an apartment in the Benjamin Banneker Houses."

Joe said, "All the modern properties built for Negro people have some historical significance attached to the name given to them. I know the place where I live was named after a Negro playwright and novelist. But who on earth was Benjamin Banneker?"

Weller looked directly at Joe. The gaze was filled with disapproval, utter contempt.

Duffy said, "Benjamin Banneker. Hmmm?"

"Yes," Joe said. "What did he do--if anything?"

Weller said, "Banneker was an early American Astronomer and

inventor. He was born free?"

Joe said, "Oh, ah--yes?"

Welles' face flamed red with anger. His eyes pit fire at Joe. He said, "You would know that Bannaker built the first clock ever to be constructed in America?" Then he looked away.

A vein appeared in the conversation. It lasted about thirty seconds, and then O'Hara's tongue bridged the uncomfortable silence.

"Naturally you want to inform your family about what's happened?" O'Hara looked at Welles.

Welles said, "My wife and I both came from Detroit, Vermont, Lieutenant. But there's no one there to be notified about this. Neither my wife nor I have relatives. My business associates already know about the incident?"

"I suggest," O'Hara said, "you get a lawyer to write a circular. We've already ruled work to be done in your home. We just don't want to get into a fuss. So let us know where we can reach you, and--"

Welles said, "I shall be at the Tremont Hotel--here in the city?"

JOE AND CHAS WENT into the kitchen to have a talk with the maid, Alice Crawford. Down to the most unimpressive sight, the kitchen continued the ill-considered department store motif in the Welles residence. And Alice Crawford herself might just as well have been the perfect female domestic so often portrayed in such commercial institutions' "better" advertisements. About thirty years old, she was aged slightly to be attractive and sexless. She spoke with a trace of an English accent.

It wasn't a bad job, though. It fit in with the plan
 out of the tent but lingered in the tent of British soldiers
 with their London "batters"

"Oh," he said, "I really can't say anything about
 Willie Brown. Willie, to my knowledge, has never been with
 before of anything like that. I don't know what's
 wrong with Willie?"

"What could be wrong with him?" Shaw asked.

"That's what it is," he replied. "I don't know he's with
 him?"

Joe said, "Just what kind of fellow is Willie Brown?"

"He goes on his own business and not interfere with
 that which didn't concern him," Alice said. "Of course,
 I'm speaking about what went on back here. If you don't mind, I'll
 just not say anything about what went on between Willie and them.
 I suppose it was all right"

Shaw said, "We don't want you to go on speaking about, lady.
 Not is. But--just who didn't like who in the house?"

"Willie was independent, you know," Alice Crawford said. "And
they--well, they never talked before in back here. Oh, I really
 don't know how to express my impression of the situation, if you
 please, Mr. I really don't. It was--well, as if they and Willie
 were--were--"

"Were what?" Joe asked.

Alice Crawford said, "I was here--oh a long, long time before
 Willie came on the cook. And they were so very, very expensive.
 But once I came in the back door--when I don't think anyone was
 expecting me, but it happened to happen in the living-room, I'm
 Now maybe I didn't see it clearly. But--"

"Yeah?" Shaw said. "What didn't you see so clear?"

"They all willie were all sitting down. But not sitting down. And not like willie was getting the sack. More like it was business that made them all do that. Only willie was doing the talking!"

"What was he saying?" Joe asked.

Alice Crawford said, "I really don't know. Willie would never give in to my aunt to talk about it. And oh, please, this Willie seemed to be very well educated; not at all like the colored people are supposed to be!"

"How many colored people do you know?" Shaw asked.

"To tell you the truth, sir," Alice Crawford said, "I don't know very many!"

Shaw said, "Name the ones you do know?"

"I do believe, sir, now that I think about it, I know only Willie!" Alice Crawford said. "That is," she added, "I speak to!"

"How'd you and the wellesees get along?" Shaw asked.

"Wonderfully well." Alice Crawford said. "They never give parties. They often went out to dinner--but only to restaurants and such places!"

"You have a key to the house?" Shaw asked.

"Yes sir--to the back door!"

"Did Willie Brown have a key too?" Shaw said.

"Yes sir!"

"Who else had keys to this house--beside the wellesees, of course, and you and Willie?"

"Oh, no one else, sir!"

Joe and Shaw then lingered long in the kitchen. Willie Brown,

not alone in fact, as it is inevitable subject. I left the house and got in on a car. As they were going out, I saw Shaw's attention to the "Venetian blinds" at the "belle's" windows.

The two detectives were in the van. The van and where to follow were provided by the City. The comment of the police was given not publicly, as that they go to the "Bing" in Brown's house, they were not to be one of the "special" "special police" employed by the "special" police, and secured from him the information of the "special" police. The "special" police. They were going to the "special" police. Instead, they walked a few flights of stairs, and then on Brown's apartment door but not to go to the door. The "special" police were ready in case the need arose to use their guns.

Their knocking brought no response.

Joe remained beside the door while Shaw again sought the "special" policeman to secure a pass-key. Shortly, the "special" policeman, entrance--and found not a single door in the apartment. The tiny foyer or living-room or bedroom or kitchenette--the door to bid them welcome.

They found Brown's apartment clean, orderly--and revealing. It revealed the presence of a man's clothing in considerable quantity as well as the presence of several pieces of hand-luggage. Shaw immediately went down to the basement; when he returned he told Joe that Brown's bin there contained two trunks. Shaw found all the bin had been locked, the trunk unlocked, and that the trunks contained clothing. The detectives thereupon agreed Brown was hardly away on an extended visit.

The apartment also disclosed Brown to be a bachelor--with feminine affiliations. In the bedroom closet were four dresses, a

Joe said, "You're a little off balance, aren't you?"

Joe had now concluded Brown to be an indulgent reader, for his living-room's wall had been transformed into ceiling-high completely filled bookshelves. A cluttered table made disclosures too. In a single drawer were two significant items: read of turning to the amount of three hundred dollars; and a bank book showing fifteen years of deposits and a ten thousand dollar balance. On top of the desk, in addition to accessories and telephone, were two more interesting items: a large reference text book; and a photograph bearing the inscription -- "Lillie!"

The photograph interested Shaw. "Brother Brown," he said, "that sex-appeal--à la Hollywood. See?"

A "color" portrait, it depicted a man with soft, curly, black hair, ruddy tan skin, brown eyes, and regular, sensitive features.

Joe said, "Lots of good-looking negro men like that around?"

Shaw said, "Only; I don't see 'em in pictures. Why not?"

"A little. The Hollywood code, I understand, doesn't permit it."

"There's Lena Horne," Shaw said. "What's on the screen?"

Joe said, "Change her sex to male. Change her first name to Lenard. Keep the good looks. Off the screen!"

Shaw said, "Does a Negro guy in pictures have to be the regulation Sambo type--all the time?"

Joe gestured around the room, at the books. "I wonder if Brown has a particular interest in America's controversial and perennial subject--the Negro question? He certainly has a comprehensive collection of stuff non-fiction, fiction, and standard reference text --about Negro people: by white and Negro authors, alike?"

Shaw said, "Now anything about this big book he has here on the desk?"

Joe roll it. "For students of the Negro Question--it's bound to be indispensable?"

The volume was nine and three quarters inches by eleven and three quarters inches by two inches. Shaw flipped open the cover to the title page; and, aloud, read, "Table 15. Negro Population, 1910-1940. Department Of Commerce, Bureau Of The Census, Chas. I. Rogers, Director. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1943."

"He has a book-barker talk between the pages; Joe, roll. Take a look, see what the interest was?"

Shaw turned the pages; said, "The stuff at the top of column two on page 214 is underlined--says: 'Table 15 shows the percentage mulatto in the population of each of the 30 cities having in 1940 a Negro population of 5,000 or more. In 18 of these cities--20 in the South, 7 in the North, and 1 in the West--mulattos constituted one-third or more of the Negro population. Greenville, S. C., with a Negro population 13.7 per cent mulatto, was the only one of the cities listed in Table 14 in which mulattos constituted one-half or more of the Negro population.'"

"That's all that's underlined here," Shaw continued. "What's the point to you? This is talkin' about something; back in 1940?"

"That's the point," Joe said. "You take 1940. Then you take the present--after you carefully consider what's happened between that decade and the present?"

"I don't get it," Shaw said, "So let's skip it--for now. What's more we'd better telephone report in on how things stand in connection with Brown?"

"That's the very play," Joe said.

Shaw called Headquarters; Lieutenant O'Hara and Inspector Duffy

He told at the Heller residence, so Sh... called there. When he cradled the 'phone, he told Joe:

"You must be in Chief Heller's office for a conference on this case at six o'clock!"

Joe glanced at his wrist-watch. "It's two o'clock now. What do we do in the meantime?"

"You stay here—just in case Brown shows," Shaw said. "That is: until you're relieved in about forty minutes by a guy from my outfit. Then squeeze Brown's neighbors for information."

"Okay?"

"Meanwhile I play around boy," Shaw said. "I'm to visit that Standard Employment Agency and the bank. Also, I got to do something Bilbo will just love!"

"The woman's clothes in the closet?"

"Yeah," Shaw said. "I got to take 'em and see if they'll fetch either Mrs. Martha Welles or Alice Crawford!"

Joe said, "I think the clothes will get you one big black!"

When Shaw left the apartment, Joe did one more looking-around. There was a portable typewriter beside the living-room bench. He'd already looked at it with his eyes. Now he examined the machine with his mind.

He decided that there was a connection between the typewriter and Brown's books.

However, he was unable to find the link with which to establish that connection. When he had searched every place in the apartment where that link was likely to be found, Joe concluded that it was not on the premises.

A member of the Homicide Squad arrived. Joe left the apartment.

"I see. What else?"

Joe's grin was a wide one. "Like you said--nether J. nor Alice Crawford matched those clothes!"

Joe said no more? They talking to the conference in Chief Bell's office. He'd been relieved from making a written report in connection with the murder in the box. Joe had stayed on duty--not that he liked it. Bell--his boss--lived with the wife's relatives and photographs--he liked the meeting. Among those present were Inspector Duffy, Lieutenant O'Hara, Dr. Winston; and the two detectives--one expert, Detective Barrett and the small.

Bell asked the confab. "Dr. Winston," he said, "you and your assistants did a post-mortem. What's the result in English, please?"

"Very well," Winston said. "The blow with the wrench on the back of the head killed the victim. A fatal death occurred this morning between seven and nine. Mrs. Wells had had two operations. One was a hysterectomy which left her sterile--that's a rather long word to use you seldom see on the radio. The other operation which she'd had later followed that and neatly tied off, rendering her sterile. That's all."

Bell looked at O'Hara; said, "This is your case, Lieutenant?"

O'Hara said, "Ham-ham. And lots of them don't fill up. For instance--the police didn't find a warrant, so they can't find a record of either Wells or his wife ever having lived there or lived there. I went over the Wells home with a fine-tooth comb. I didn't find even a single letter to show the Wellses had any family!"

"Both may be orphans," Bell said. "Foundlings perhaps. Maybe Wells didn't want it when he had his wife or if an illegitimate."

Belden said, "Humm-huh. But--if he killed Mrs. Welles--why didn't he kill it?"

O'Hara shrugged again. "Blackmail may have been his angle."

Belden said, "No one broke into the house and killed Mrs. Welles. What do you think of the idea that Mrs. Welles admitted the murderer to the house this morning?"

Inspector Coffey said, "I don't think much of that idea."

"Willie Brown," the Chief said, "had a woman. She visited Brown in his apartment. It wasn't Alice Crawford. It wasn't Mrs. Welles. So it was an unknown. Now. Is she important?"

Joe said, "What she knows is important!"

Belden looked at Joe. "Wouldn't know where Willie Brown is?"

"I doubt it," Joe said.

Belden leaned back in his chair. "One of three people," he said, "killed Mrs. Martha Welles. Either Alice Crawford. Or John Welles. Or Willie Brown."

O'Hara said, "We've got a warrant out for Brown!"

Belden said, "Lieutenant, until you find Brown--keep somebody in his apartment 'round the clock!"

Joe went home. Shaw went back to Brown's apartment to relieve the man there. At two o'clock next morning, Joe knocked on the door of Brown's apartment to relieve Shaw.

"This could go on--indefinitely," Shaw said.

Joe shook his head. "I don't think so," he told Shaw.

Shaw gave Joe a long, searching look. "You've got an angle. What is it, Joe?"

"I could be wrong," Joe replied. "I don't want to make a damn fool out of myself!"

Joe looked at the light switch and saw that it was on. He
Joe looked; and, "Yes, it's on. It must have been
light switch or the door. A light switch, with the light
have switched it on!"

Shaw said, "Keep your gun handy!"

He kept the light on, and Joe went off to the door. He
saw in the dark that the door was open. The door was
Parker House, like all other doors in the house, had
no permanent lock but a door lock. So the only way to
Bryan's father's door was by a key. The door was
by the door. The chair Joe occupied was placed just inside
the bedroom door so he could observe the entrance to the room.

Time passed. Joe smoked cigarette after cigarette. But he
could do in all daylight--smoke cigarette after cigarette. He had to take
care, however, to have the smoke from the cigarette--the
light of the cigarette wouldn't be burning in the room. He might
attempt to slip through the hall door.

If someone attempted to do this, the door would be open.

The Park bath inside and outside the hall was open at
all times. Occasionally, the light from the door would be
noticeably disturbed by the light. Joe didn't have to check the
He wasn't sleepy. He didn't think about the Park House murder
case. He'd already thought about it. He had thought. But he
knew would happen--now, or another night.

Then--it happened.

He didn't hear the foot steps near to the door. He didn't see
the key being slowly and carefully inserted in the lock.

He didn't move--not a bit, not a sound. All he did was to
get up out of the chair and take a position behind the door.

tion on her with the gun at his ready. He could tell the instant she was walking-by her footstep in the foyer, and by the slightest faint scent of perfume. She came straight into the bedroom and reached for the light switch--as if she knew where it was. The ceiling light flared up. She then started for the closet.

Joe's voice was soft, casual. He didn't want the woman to know. He said, "Stop where you are. Drop your handbag."

The woman didn't scream and she did what she'd been told to do.

"Put your hand over your head. Keep them there. Walk away from the bag." Again the woman followed orders. Joe picked up the bag and hung it by its straps over his gun arm. Next he approached the woman from behind. With his left hand he felt her body, looking for a knife or a gun. He found neither. The woman's body was soft and warm.

Joe said, "Now go ahead of me and switch on the living-room ceiling light."

Walking into the living room, the woman said, "I suppose you're a policeman?"

"I am. Detective Joe Hill. Central Bureau."

In the living room, Joe gestured at a sofa. The woman sat down on the sofa. Joe, it was his gun, sat down across the room in a chair, secured the woman's handbag and took out a combination bill folder and identification case. He found a driver's license, a security number, and a filled-in identification card.

He looked at the woman.

Her features were good, stylish. Her hair was soft, black. Her eyes were blue. She had brown eyes, a straight nose, and strikingly regular features. The driver's license said she was thirty-five. She had the look of a girl, kind and late of a twenty-year-old girl.

"... is a physician; Dr. Ralph D. Stokes:

"... nodded her head; and, 'What are you going to do with me?'"

"He said 'Willie Brown?'"

"I don't know."

"What did you come here for--the clothes?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been Brown's mistress?"

Mrs. Stokes said, "I'm glad you're a Negro policeman."

"Why? Because a white man might figure you out? Give you a break?"

"Yes."

"Hamm. Well?"

"It was in the night; and on the morning after, I found it. I hoped the police wouldn't be here."

"Go on."

"Willie and I started going together before we were married. Both came from Greenville, South Carolina. I got married, and Willie and I were afraid of 'Hamm'."

"When did you start sleeping together?"

"A week before I got married."

"And ever since?"

"I love him."

"Dr. Stokes?"

"He said, 'I'm glad you're a Negro policeman?'"

Joe said, "I'll let you go. Willie Brown didn't"

want to be a doctor or a dentist or a lawyer. Your family--perhaps
is interested in getting else he might want to be.
interested to join family as a young man?
might?"

"Right. I guess you know enough about Negroes?"

"Go on," Joe said.

"First, my husband," the woman said, "in twenty years after
that man. He got his degree in medicine. With that, he got the
rest of the things. He kind of Negro really went--the kind of kin
ship, kind of property, the child, and the social prestige among
people that matters. He hasn't lost a side of a textbook
or read a complete article in a medical journal since the day he
got his license to practice"

"Chippy chaser?"

"He thinks he's the king of sepia chippy chasers"

Joe chuckled. "I suppose he's a NAACP member, contributes to
the Urban League, attends all the Negro physicians' organizations'
conventions, thinks he's a top 'race leader', never misses a for-
mal dance this side of Washington and as far west as L. A., and
votes the Republican ticket--in memory of Lincoln"

"That's my husband"

"What about your world?"

"I have two sons--one by Ralph; one by Willie--and a good job.
I want to protect my children and the job. I'm a supervisor in a
--let's call it a social service welfare bureau?"

"You're assuming I'm going to give you a break?"

"Please," the woman said, "let me wish you'll be human"

"Willie Brian," Joe said, "was writing a book--about Negroes.
where's the manuscript?"

"When white people find that out," Joe said, "time will be pretty damn late. Now tell me what you know about Brown's family. I'm particularly interested in who his mother was. I'd like to know, too, if she had any brothers and sisters?"

"His mother is Ella Welbourne Brown. She lives in Chicago. She has two brothers John and George Welbourne. Now, I suppose you can figure from there?"

"Where do the Welbourne brothers live?"

"Both moved from Greenville to Chicago during World War I."

"Okay. Now let's go get in your car."

When they were in the car the woman had parked near the entrance to Brown's house-unit, Joe pointed out the way to Headquarters. A block away from there, he told the woman to stop the car.

Joe got out; said, "Your place in Harlem is about an hour and half distance from here." ~~and then~~

"Thanks"

"Finish that book, huh? And get it published"

"I will"

"One more question. Where'd Brown get enough money to save up ten thousand bucks?"

"Willie had two vices--me and gambling. As a gambler, he was consistently 'lucky'."

"Get going!"

The car drove away.

JOE WENT STRAIGHT TO Chief Belden's office. Awaiting him were Chief Belden, Inspector Duffy, Lieutenant O'Hara, Shaw--and John Welles.

"Okay," O'Hara said, "there he is!" He nodded at Welles.

Joe looked at Welles; said, "Which one of the Welbournes was your father--John or George?"

Welles said, "I don't know what you mean!"

"Willie Brown's mother was Ella Welbourne. One of her brothers was your father. The other of her brothers was your wife's father. You married your first cousin!"

O'Hara said, "Wouldn't that make Willie Brown his first cousin too?"

Nobody said anything for a long time. Welles just stared at Joe; Joe and everyone else in the room stared at Welles.

After a while Welles looked at Chief Belden; said, "I'll make a deal!"

Belden looked at Joe; said, "I've heard about this sort of thing--read about it. How often does it happen?"

Welles said, "Can't we make a deal?"

Looking at Belden, Joe said, "I've seen it happening--lots of times. I always wanted to know one thing--how it ended!"

O'Hara said, "Joe, there had to be a point when you began to suspect this. At what point did you begin to suspect?"

Joe said, "When you and I and Shaw were in his living-room. You and Shaw were talking about his reactions when he went into the bedroom with us and looked at his wife. You said his wife meant a lot to him. But he bottled up his emotions and put the stopper in--like doing that was his religion. That was when I began to suspect. His kind would react--in exactly that fashion!"

Shaw said, "Yeah. And then you made that crack about not knowing who and what Benjamin Banneker was, huh?"

O'Hara said, "And you did know who Banneker was!"

Welles said, "There won't have to be a trial and--and the publicity as a result of the testimony--if I plead guilty!"

Chief Belden said, "You can't plead guilty to murder. In this state, you have to stand trial for murder!"

"It'll be a matter of indictment," Welles said. "Some degree of manslaughter. I'll plead guilty to some degree of manslaughter!"

O'Hara said, "His wife's maiden name was Welbourne!"

"Was Willie Brown going to talk about it? Tell it? Blackmail this guy and his wife?" Inspector Daffy said.

Joe said, "I doubt it!" He looked at Welles.

Welles said, "It wasn't that way. I'll tell you exactly how it was--if we can make a deal. Please. A deal--so it won't be spread about--spread all over the papers. Those nigger papers will--"

Joe said, "You sonofa--"

Welles said, "I meant the Negro--the colored--papers. That's what I meant to say!"

Chief Belden said, "We don't use that word--that other word--around here!"

Welles said, "Oh. Excuse me!"

Joe looked at O'Hara. "Lieutenant," he said, "I'd like to have those woman's clothes we found in Brown's apartment!"

O'Hara said, "So she showed tonight, huh? Somebody you know?"

Joe shook his head. "No. But I like her. She'll get messed up plenty--if we drag her in!"

Welles said, "It was this way. Willie came back from the Navy. We needed a cook. The Standard Employment Agency sent him to us. It was a long time. But he recognized us. He'd tell us about our people, our family. We were living in a vacuum. I wanted to go

on that way. You see, Martha and I had cut ourselves off from the family. Entirely. We'd even fixed it so there'd be no children. Then Martha got curious. She wanted to see our people. Just once, she said. But I knew it would be again and again. So--"

He stopped talking, spread his arms wide; then let them flop hard against his sides.

Joe said, "Then you got Willie to go driving with you. And killed him?"

Welles said, "We were in my car. I slowed it--said I thought we had a rear flat. Willie got out with me to look at the flat. That was Sunday night. There wasn't any flat. It was something I'd planned. Martha didn't know. I hit him with a rock--while he bent down in the dark to look at the tire. Then I went home and told Martha. I told her that the first person in years who'd--. What I told her made her all the more determined to see the family. I didn't want to kill Martha. I didn't want to. I had to!"

O'Hara said, "If it's all right with Chief Belden, Joe, you can give that woman--whoever she is--her clothes"

Belden said, "It's suppressing evidence. But--. Okay, we'll let her have her clothes. She must be kind of all right?"

Welles said, "You'll do that for Willie's woman? Willie was just a cook. Look! I'm a white man. Willie was a--a--"